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A BENEFICENT LIFE

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TRIBUTES TO THE MEMORY OF  
JENNIE M. COLBY

GRADUATE OF PERKINS INSTITUTION

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FEBRUARY, 1920

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MISS JENNIE M. COLBY



A BENEFICENT LIFE  
TRIBUTES TO THE MEMORY OF  
MISS JENNIE M. COLBY  
GRADUATE OF PERKINS INSTITUTION

A heart at leisure from itself.

*A. L. Waring.*

Strengthened with might through His spirit.

*Ephesians III. 16.*

Little and large alike drop quietly aside  
from the prudence that suits immortality.

*Walt Whitman.*

Those persons who knew Miss Colby best, need not the revealing light which death often throws upon a character, to disclose to them the quality of her spirit or the value of her work and her influence. But for the sake of those to whom she was less well-known, or even unknown, it is thought that this collection of tributes, which her death called forth, should be published, that so the inspiration of her example might be more widely spread.

What her life demonstrated anew was the practicability of following high ideals and living a notably useful life in spite of defective sight and other physical drawbacks.

The tributes which follow were read before the Perkins Alumnae Association June 5, 1919, at its first meeting after Miss Colby's death. The article by James J. Putnam, M.D., the eminent neurologist, was written for the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, and appeared in its issue of October 31, 1918.

## DEATH OF MISS COLBY

*By* JAMES J. PUTNAM, M.D.

It is eminently fitting that the physicians of Boston should take some notice of the death of that quite remarkable person, Miss Jennie M. Colby, who so long and so devotedly served the interests of the sick, as masseuse, and who was always so loyal an advocate of the principle that all therapeutic measures, although applied by another person—no matter how skilful—should be under the constant supervision of the doctor in charge.

Miss Colby was born in Saybrook, Conn., in, or about, the year 1859. She numbered among her ancestors five great-uncles prominent in the educational world, two of them being presidents of colleges. Her education was received partly in Saybrook, but chiefly in the Perkins Institution for the Blind, from which she was graduated in 1883, for she suffered from a heavy handicap in the form of a serious impairment of vision which, in the case of many a person of less strong character, would have been prohibitive of labors and enterprises such as she undertook and successfully carried through. She worked up to the very last day of her life, dying suddenly and alone, presumably from apoplexy, on September 16, 1918.

She studied her massage and gymnastics mainly under Dr. Douglas Graham and the late Baron Posse, for both of whom she had a high respect. In 1883 she set up for herself, and from then on she practised her art with a single-minded devotion to the interests of her patients, the wishes of the physician and the advancement of her chosen and important work. It was my good fortune to make her acquaintance early in her career, and to have her coöperation in a great many cases, and I aver with pleasure that over and above the benefits which she brought to my patients by her skill, her faithfulness and her personality, she also inspired in me, whether I would or no, something of her own sense of obligation. Indeed, a



person of finer character I have rarely seen. She was always studious, intelligent and discriminative, of a happy and contented disposition, and blessed with a number of good friends.

It is worth recording, also, that Miss Colby was, to a great extent, the parent of hydrotherapeutics in this city, although in this respect our efforts went hand in hand. Our first essays in this direction were made, if I remember rightly, not long after the publication by Dr. Mary Putnam Jacoby of New York of an interesting paper in which she warmly advocated the use of wet packs, followed by massage, in the treatment of anemia. I suggested to Miss Colby to try these packs on behalf of a lady living in one of the hotels in Boston—so many years ago that I should hesitate to estimate the number. This first attempt proved eminently satisfactory, and, from then on, Miss Colby worked up the various water treatments—at first only in so far as this could be done simply in private houses, afterward in a miniature establishment which she organized in her own apartments on Newbury Street. Finally, she moved to a large gymnasium in the Farragut Building, a portion of which was fitted up with complete hydrotherapeutic apparatus, and this has remained, up to the present day, as the home of the well known “Medical Baths” which still fill a very useful place. It was evident from the first that this enterprise would not be a lucrative one, but to Miss Colby that was an entirely secondary consideration. She thought that the two modes of treatment, the physical and the hydrotherapeutic, ought to be combined, and she devoted herself whole-heartedly to combining them.

Her best professional skill was ardently devoted to the children in the Out-Patient Department of the Children’s Hospital. To this work she gave her services—of course without payment—two afternoons a week for twenty-five years.

But it was not only as an actual practitioner in massage

and exercises that Miss Colby won her reputation. For a number of years she carried on a gymnasium in which she had a number of pupils who have become well known to the profession ever since; and I believe that all of them have continued to hold the same opinion of her that I have held.

She was not by any means a purely passive person, but a determined advocate of what she thought was right and ready to oppose vigorously, if necessary, those whom she believed were on the wrong track. It was with no lax good nature but with the true missionary spirit that she would work sometimes, for some special patient, for months, day after day, with no expectation of payment, and she richly deserves to have it said of her, "well done, good and faithful servant."

NOTE:—Miss Colby was the author, either alone or with others, of several valuable publications. The most important of these was "Educational Gymnastic Play," written by Fannie L. Johnson and Jennie M. Colby, a book of practical directions, eighty pages in length, describing excellent exercises and games for children, in considerable detail.

## IN LOVING MEMORY OF JENNIE M. COLBY

*By* LENNA D. SWINERTON

*Medical Gymnast in the Department of Physical Training  
Perkins Institution*

Miss Jennie M. Colby came to the Perkins Institution at South Boston in September 1879, and with her came her friend, and ours, Miss Annie Emilie Poulsson.

Miss Colby was then twenty years of age and had, as compared with blindness, a fair degree of sight.

She and Miss Poulsson had met as patients at the New Haven Hospital where both had been receiving treatment for their eyes, and where they had formed a deep and abiding friendship for each other.

But this friendship, though so intimate, was never exclusive; for together they generously opened their lives and shared all that they had power to give, not only with the girls then in school, but also with an ever-widening circle of acquaintances—those to whom they could minister as well as those with whom they had common interests.

The new zest of life, the new spirit of comradeship which their presence brought into the school can only be appreciated by pupils and teachers who had lived in the school before they arrived.

Suffice it to say that their friendship exerted a most precious and much needed influence upon the life of the writer; it also developed a more harmonious spirit in the household and a closer unity between all the households of the girls' department.

Miss Poulsson was a teacher who being suddenly overtaken with serious trouble in her eyes, had come to the school as a special student; but Miss Colby, entering as a regular pupil, loyal in keeping all the rules, and careful always to recognize the teachers as her superiors, became at once a natural leader among the girls. Speaking of her Miss Bennett, our principal teacher, says:—"Jennie came to us with the fine qualities of her birth—right; integrity, respect for authority and a will to do. Her life at school and since has told for truth, reverence and service."

In addition to these noble qualities she had a cheerful, hopeful temperament, a keen sense of humor, a lively relish for dramatics and a genuine love for play. She was endowed with an exceptional fund of mechanical ingenuity, was an excellent disciplinarian and a natural organizer. This was indeed a rare combination of gifts to bring into a school which offered ample opportunity for their exercise.

Miss Colby and Miss Poulsson together made it possible for every girl in school to appear in costume at a certain character party held in the gymnasium—the little



girls representing Red Ridinghood, the Snow Image, and other children of renown, while older girls were arrayed as Old Mother Hubbard, the Gipsy from *Il Trovatore*, a group of dancing ghosts, etc. They also organized the secret club known as the I. S. M. Society, whose members learned and gave the Masque of Comus, and gave it so well that Mr. Anagnos headed the list of officers who presented the formal petition to have it repeated. Members of the English class who took part in this play were excused from their examination in literature. Miss Moore, their teacher in English, said they had "passed"!

But school life was not all play. Miss Colby was an earnest, diligent student. Her years of schooling must be few; for it was necessary for her to earn her own living. In fact, she had to work in each summer vacation to get money for clothes and carfares for the next year.

Her defect of sight was due to hereditary cataract. She was determined never to marry—not to take the risk of transmitting her handicap to other lives.

In her early years, before coming to the Institution, when she had stayed, often months at a time, at the New Haven Hospital for treatment, she had been allowed to help the nurses with their work. Through this experience she came to understand and adopt for herself the high professional standards taught in that training school. Her one supreme desire was to enter that school and become a trained nurse; and had sight been restored, she undoubtedly would have done so.

When the time came for the final operation on her eye she chose not to take ether; she wished to be present, as it were, at the operation and know what was being done. She felt averse to giving up consciousness; and as she possessed exceptional self-control, her wish was granted. The operation was successful; for one instant she had perfect vision. She said she could never forget the expression she observed in the face of the head nurse who stood by. The bandage was put on. In a few days inflamma-

tion had set in and the brave patient was left with very defective sight. Her chosen life-work was forbidden! The ideal requirements for trained nurses set by the New Haven Training School would not permit its faculty to receive a pupil nurse whose powers of visual observation were so limited.

Her heroic nature, her scrupulous deference toward established authority, the unswerving determination with which she always adhered to what she believed to be right, regardless of the cost to herself, led her to accept this decision as just and inviolable.

Members of the New Haven faculty, however, feeling deeply interested in Miss Colby, suggested that massage, which was then beginning to attract attention as a remedial measure, might offer the nearest possible alternative to the profession she would have chosen.

Soon after leaving the hospital she came to Perkins Institution that she might develop her sense of touch and learn to conserve the limited sight remaining to her. After four years she was graduated in the class of '83. She used to say that the advantages afforded by this school were worth more to her than better vision could have been. Her loyal devotion to this, her *alma mater*, and her valuable work in its Alumnae Association will be dwelt upon in other papers.

An opportunity to begin her training as a physical therapist presented itself while she was in school in South Boston. It came about through an accident.

One of the teachers sprained an ankle and was advised to have it treated by a man known as Dr. Munroe, in Boston. The teacher went to him limping and in pain and returned greatly relieved and walking with comparative ease. Dr. Munroe had not only shown the efficacy of manual treatment, but also had proved that it could be successfully given without the aid of sight, for he was blind. He was a kindly man, well on in years, and would be very glad to train a pupil from the Institution in what



he chose to call, not massage, but "Munroe treatment"; and arrangements were accordingly made for Miss Colby to receive his instruction. She was an apt pupil, and in the following summer vacation was able to take a few patients to whom she gave Munroe treatment and acted as attendant. But Dr. Munroe, though skilful in the work of his hands, was, in his theories, a typical cure-all healer; and Miss Colby, at the New Haven Hospital and elsewhere, had become too thoroughly imbued with the fundamental principles of medical science and too well acquainted with the structure and functions of the human mechanism to be satisfied to practise any system of treatment which savored of quackery. She began her life-work with what she had learned from this first teacher, safeguarded by her own good sense and by the rule of practice to which she always adhered, namely, never to treat any patient except under the advice of a licensed physician.

She recognized her need of further instruction, and as soon as she had earned enough money took a course of lessons in massage from the highest authority on that subject, Douglas Graham, M. D., of Boston.

Then in order to increase her own physical strength, though she was naturally robust, and in order to learn exercises that she could couple with massage in treating patients, she joined a class in so-called American gymnastics at Miss Allen's gymnasium.

But even yet she was not satisfied with her equipment for her responsible vocation. The demand for massage as a therapeutic measure was rapidly increasing, and the new varieties of cases to which it was being applied presented serious pathological conditions which called for most discriminating judgment as well as skilful technique.

Just at this time Baron Nils Posse, a graduate of the Royal Central Gymnastic Institute at Stockholm, established himself in Boston as a teacher of medical and educational gymnastics; and Miss Colby, recognizing the

value of the knowledge he was prepared to impart, placed herself under his instruction. Her enthusiastic reports of his teaching led to Miss Bennett's taking the course and graduating from the Posse Gymnasium and adopting the Swedish system of gymnastics for the girls' classes of our gymnasium.

Baron Posse soon realized that Miss Colby had executive ability as well as professional skill, and made her an assistant, especially in medical gymnastics, in his gymnasium. He sent his pupils to her for practical experience at the free clinics for massage which she opened at the Boston Dispensary and in the Out-Patient Departments of the Free Hospital for Women, the Boston City Hospital and elsewhere. Her long personal service at the Children's Hospital will be spoken of in other papers.

Miss Colby was highly self-respecting and self-reliant in her business principles. When competition ran high her motto was: "There is always room at the top:" and instead of offering cut rates to catch more patronage, she determined to outrun her competitors by excelling them. She would never accept gifts of money in the form of overpayment from wealthy patrons; and when patients of limited means were sent to her by physicians she often gave her services in preference to making a low price.

After the first few years of practice, her earnings made it possible for her to assume the entire support of her mother who, being in delicate health, needed many little indulgences. They boarded together in a good location at the Back Bay, in order to save time and travel for Miss Colby in going to and from cases. She also, in more recent years, educated two nephews, both of whom "volunteered" and have seen service in France; one of them in New England's much honored Twenty-sixth Division.

But in addition to impaired vision Miss Colby had another handicap. From her girlhood she had suffered from that severe type of headache and nausea known

as migraine, which usually lasts three days. Every few weeks she was compelled from this cause not only to bear most excruciating pain, but also to lose many dollars in money because prevented, for the time being, from keeping engagements with patients. During the last few years of her life she also had trouble with her knees and varicose veins which gave her great discomfort; but she persisted in working in spite of these added difficulties—never complaining—rising, generally, at six in the morning and not returning from her last evening case until nearly midnight. It is needless to say that she had a strong will.

She was also most unselfish. In the early days of her own success it seemed to her that a totally blind person might find the practice of massage a desirable vocation; and it was through her personal friendship and under her professional guidance that such a graduate of this school found it possible to engage in this inspiring life work.

Miss Colby *believed* in people and made them believe in themselves. She would recognize the faintest impulse toward physical, mental or moral improvement in her patients, and by gentle, painstaking, progressive steps develop it into functioning force. This, in the writer's judgment, was one great secret of her success in her profession. Like the late Dr. J. J. Putnam, she treated "not only the disease but the whole man." In hospital work as well as in private practice her patients were not mere clinical cases, but real human beings with individual human needs.

Her life was spent for others. She was not a money-maker, but a minister; not a financier, but a philanthropist; not commercial, but professional: to her life, presented one clear calling, one definite thing to do; and to that she gave all her faculties and all her time, in the spirit of absolute consecration.



The following brief paper by Miss Burroughs was not read at the Alumnae Meeting, but it is inserted as showing the impression Miss Colby made upon one of her younger schoolmates.

## VICTORY AFTER DEFEAT

*By* MARY R. BURROUGHS

There is one point in the life of our friend, Jennie Colby, which impressed me as a young girl and which I believe conveys a valuable lesson; and that is the fact that she rebuilt her life-plan upon a disappointment.

As we all know, her one cherished ambition was to become a nurse. She loved the work and it must therefore have been a keen disappointment when her sight failed. It must have seemed at first, that her precious project would vanish "like the snowfall in the river." But it did not. As time went on, it became clear that great possibilities in that direction yet remained to her. The work which she took up and faithfully carried on was exactly in line and in keeping with her former expectations, a branch of the same profession. So that, though many things she had once hoped for had been withdrawn, yet the joy she had anticipated in caring for invalids might still be hers; and surely this thought must have brought her untold happiness.

So the musician, artist, poet, or missionary worker whose dearest aspirations seem crumbling to ashes, should take heart and learn from such lives as Miss Colby's that disappointment need be only partial. It should never be allowed to be complete. We may still do something in our chosen line. The conquest is still ours if we will make it so. Upon the foundation of apparent failure we may rear a structure not, perhaps, just what we pictured in our early dreams, but solid, fine, acceptable.



Miss Bennett, former principal of the Girls' Department of the Perkins Institution, spoke of Miss Colby's loyalty and helpfulness to the school after her graduation.

## LOYALTY AND HELPFULNESS OF MISS COLBY

*By* GAZELLA BENNETT

This subject of Miss Colby's loyalty and helpfulness to the school is very rich in happy memories, for Miss Colby's whole being was aflame with loyalty to every true enterprise with which she came in contact. It was so much a part of her personality that her simple presence inspired loyalty in others. This in itself was a source of helpfulness to the school.

Immediately after graduation she offered her services, one hour each morning, as instructor in the gymnasium. She gave her best, better than anything we had previously had. She gave this hour she said because she wanted to render some little service to her *alma mater* in return for the great opportunity it had given her. She never failed to be present at the appointed time although it must have cost her some paying patients and possibly gave the doctors some annoyance when she was essaying to establish herself in a profession. I have no doubt, however, that this faithfulness recommended her to the doctors who were trying her out as a masseuse. I am sure it did if they knew that it was an offering of appreciation.

Quickly following this service came her share in forming the Association. Miss Colby with three classmates organized and set the standard for the Perkins Institution Alumnae Association. Let them tell us their purpose.

*Resolved*, that the aim of this Association shall be:

First, to render to the Institution such systematic reports of the work of its graduates, as shall enable it at any time to promptly ascertain the residence, address and

occupation of any member of the Association or any other statistics concerning her which may be desired.

Second, to carefully tabulate such experience and observations as shall seem of possible value to ourselves or to those who have not yet entered upon "the broad field of battle," and to labor earnestly to do our little and best to forward the work so grandly carried on by the school and its benefactors.

Third, to hold ourselves ready to render, collectively or individually, any service, great or small, which our *alma mater* may require at the hands of her grateful daughters.

*Resolved*, that this is our duty as well as our privilege, and that we accept it as a sacred trust. The assurance of our teachers and the testimony of prominent schools convince us that an alumnae association of the graduates of any school may be a useful coöperative in its work, hence it becomes in a peculiar sense the duty of the graduates of the Perkins Institution to establish such an association, inasmuch as we are in a peculiar sense indebted to our school, not only for a liberal education in science and letters, but for training, technical and domestic, and nurture of individual character, by which we are fitted for the active duties of life.

In the years that have passed since these resolutions were adopted Miss Colby has done her full share in the team work of this Association. And beside all this, for many are the acts of helpfulness which the alumnae have rendered our school, we were always sure whatever help was needed that Miss Colby could give, that help would be ours as soon as she knew of the need.

Her services to the sick were unsparingly given. Personally I owe my restored health in large measure to Miss Colby's knowledge, influence and faithful attention. No word of mine can adequately express the spirit of loyalty and the breadth of service which Miss Colby rendered her *alma mater*.

## MISS COLBY AND THE PERKINS INSTITUTION ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION

By JULIA E. BURNHAM

*Secretary of the Alumnae Association*

It was the purpose of the members of the class of 1883, of which Miss Colby was an honored member, to take steps toward the formation of an Alumnae Association before leaving school; but an abrupt ending to their schooldays made this quite impossible, and it was in October of the following year when the nucleus of an Alumnae Association was formed.

From that time until the Association was well on its feet Miss Colby was unceasing in her efforts for its welfare. The formation and nurture of such an association was a service which her *alma mater* required "at the hands of her grateful daughters" and therefore it must take first place in her thought and life.

So, it was Miss Colby who made trips to the stations to meet those coming to Boston on Alumnae business; she, who entertained those from a distance; she, who was ever on the alert to see in what way that Association could be of service to the school; and she, who was ever watchful lest the Association or any of its members should fall one fraction of an inch below the standard set for it by the Director and the teachers of the school.

While Miss Colby was secretary of the Association the work was done in a most systematic and business-like manner and the reports took a permanent form. Although she kept this office but a comparatively short time, and after resigning it never held any conspicuous place in the Association, she was many times, and perhaps most times, "the power behind the throne" which kept the Association from unconsciously lowering its standard and from foundering upon some hidden or treacherous reef. Her sense of right and wrong was so well



defined, and her power to make others see her point of view and, as Captain January says, to "take things by and large" was so great that she was of inestimable value to those who thought they knew which course should be followed but questioned their own judgment.

As her professional work increased she sometimes had to deny herself the privilege of attending the Alumnae meetings; for she felt that when she could relieve or alleviate suffering her own pleasure must be sacrificed for the sake of humanity; and often, when she was obliged to forego the pleasure of attending the meeting she gave to the treasurer the money which she earned while the meeting was in progress.

When any special extra work was undertaken by the Association, in which circumstances prohibited her from taking an active part, her purse was always wide open and she helped in a financial way when she had no time to help otherwise.

Work for the Association which Miss Colby could do in her own room or on the cars while going from patient to patient and for which she could choose her own time was gladly undertaken and performed with a nicety and exactness worthy of emulation, though this necessitated the sacrifice of many hours of needed rest. Thus, when the Association conducted the celebration of the centenary of the birth of Dr. Samuel G. Howe in 1901, and in 1904 held a fair to raise money to enlarge and further the home industries for blind women, it was Miss Colby and Miss Swinerton who attended to all press notices, posters, etc. in a most painstaking and efficient manner.

The influence of Miss Colby, one of our charter members, will be felt for many years by those who have the conduct of the work of the Association; and it rests with us all to keep her high standards and ideals ever in mind, and to remember that she has told us that we must

"Conquer trials o'er and o'er;  
Our standard be 'Excelsior!'"



"She had a natural wise sincerity,  
A simple truthfulness, and these had lent her  
A dignity as moveless as the center;  
So that no influence of earth could stir  
Her steadfast courage, nor could take away  
The holy peacefulness, which, night and day  
Unto her queenly soul did minister."

Miss Priscilla Reynolds, now Director of the clinic at the Children's Hospital, which Miss Colby carried on for so many years, gave a brief account of Miss Colby's work at that clinic.

## MISS COLBY AND THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

*By* PRISCILLA REYNOLDS

About thirty years ago Dr. William Bullard, who was in charge of the neurological department of the Children's Hospital, found that there were all kinds of paralyzed children who needed therapeutic treatment and that the Hospital provided nobody for such work. He was in touch with Miss Colby at that time in his private practice and she volunteered to go to the Hospital and treat these paralyzed children; and from that time on for twenty-five years she remained in charge of this clinic, giving her services two afternoons a week, often not getting through with the little patients until eight o'clock at night. It was not easy to get anyone else to volunteer for the work, and for a long time she was entirely alone in it. A vivid picture comes to my mind of that small crowded room with its benches along the side of the walls, covered with mothers and babies, sisters and brothers, dirty, crying, but always welcomed and loved by Miss Colby.

From her initiative Christmas saw a Christmas tree

in that same room, packed with presents and candy for each and every child, and, as a visitor once said, "dirty they were, the room stuffy beyond words; but still a marvellous atmosphere of love pervaded all."

All this time the clinic was increasing in size and variety of cases, until now it has become a large general clinic, supported by the Hospital authorities, with eight or more paid workers, a secretary and volunteer and a director. The clinic has now an average of forty cases an afternoon and of six thousand treatments a year.

Miss Colby with her keen perception of child nature very soon saw that no young child could be made to do exercises in the regular way, that is by command, "arms sidewise fling," or by counting, "one, two, three," each day for years unless there was something to appeal as a play to the child mind. She therefore developed plays adapted to the exercises needed for the paralyzed children, such as this one, for instance, "Rockets ready. Shoot," which in technical language is elevation of the arms above the head. Such play quickly gets the child's attention; moreover, the child does not forget it. When done at home under the direction of the mother, brothers and sisters join in; dolls are found to need the same exercise, and so it goes, play inducing repetition of the helpful exercises.

In any such clinic there are always more cases to be treated than there is time for, but there was a standing joke among the doctors that no matter how busy Miss Colby was she would never refuse a baby. The doctor would come in and say, "Miss Colby, I have a new case for you, I suppose you are too busy to take it." "What is it, doctor?" "It's a baby." It was never refused. Back would come Miss Colby with the baby in her arms and one more was added to the list of her patients.

Miss Colby was a remarkable teacher and I constantly find that we are referring to her way of doing the work, or saying, Miss Colby always thought this or that. There

never was any question as to her knowledge of her subject, and I never knew her to make a wrong diagnosis, yet she always waited for the doctor's diagnosis, and followed his instructions with the greatest faithfulness and intelligence. There are hundreds, yes thousands of paralyzed children, especially the cases of obstetrical paralysis, who owe the use of their limbs to Miss Colby's patience and intelligent care.

For many years she had her own gymnasium and school of massage and her private work was kept up to the last. In all this work she was much handicapped by poor eyesight and ill health.

Think of the energy and spirit necessary for such an active life—school, hospital, and private work never finished until late at night. Here certainly is a striking example of what can be accomplished by one woman who gives herself unselfishly and devotedly to a cause.

## LETTER FROM DR. BULLARD

June 1, 1919.

SECRETARY OF THE PERKINS INSTITUTION ALUMNAE  
ASSOCIATION:

*Dear Madam,*—As I see in the Transcript that exercises in memory of Miss Jennie M. Colby are to be held by the Alumnae Association on the 5th of June, I take this opportunity to express my high appreciation of the work which Miss Colby carried on gratuitously for so many years in my department at the Children's Hospital in Boston. Of her skill, care and devotion I cannot speak too highly.

Without her the massage and the educational exercise work in the Department of the Diseases of the Nervous System could never have been satisfactorily initiated and

developed. Her remarkable technical skill, her patience and tact with both mothers and children enabled us for some years to perform a work of great value to many poor crippled and paralyzed children and to relieve and help many for whom elsewhere no help could be found.

If it be suitable I should be glad if you would present this note to the Association.

Very truly,

WILLIAM N. BULLARD, M.D.

## AN APPRECIATION

*By* J. J. THOMAS, M.D.

*Neurologist at the Children's Hospital, Boston*

It is with pleasure that I have accepted the invitation to take part in this meeting today as one of those who have known and honored Miss Colby. I do not expect to be able to tell you anything of her or her work which is not already well known to all of you, but at least I can express my appreciation of her work as I have known of it.

It was my good fortune to have seen a great deal of Miss Colby, both in her work for my private patients, and still more in being associated with her in hospital work for many years. The work that she did, as most of you must know, was much more than therapeutic exercise work, or that of a masseuse. Miss Colby was always open-minded to the advantages of new methods and application of physiological means which could be used for the cure or alleviation of pathological conditions. It was this readiness to apply all methods of relief that led to her undertaking to establish a hydrotherapeutic plant where baths of all types could be given on the prescriptions of physicians.

\* \* \* \* \*



Another great step in the application of physiological measures to treatment which we owe to Miss Colby, I wish to emphasize especially. This was the application of a principle which others have recently written a great deal about, but to my knowledge this was applied independently of others by Miss Colby, and so far as I know was appreciated and developed by her here in Boston *long* before it was used by anyone in any place. As you know, Miss Colby for many years worked at the Children's Hospital in conjunction with the Neurological Department. Here there were treated large numbers of cases of infantile paralysis and we soon came to appreciate that much better results were obtained by her treatment in developing the muscles left weak by this disease than could be gotten by any other methods of treatment. Not only did she use massage to improve the nutrition of the affected muscles, but she developed their strength by exercises, directed so as to use the desired muscles, and she also showed conclusively that this was the most essential mode of treatment in these cases, to which all other methods were merely auxiliary, and of use only as aids or to remove some special defect such as deformity. In addition she very early in her work discovered one most important principle of the treatment of infantile paralysis by exercises, which even yet has hardly been sufficiently emphasized. This was that in the exercise of these weakened muscles one must guard them most carefully against fatigue, using exercise in carefully measured amounts, very gradually increased, and limiting the voluntary use of the affected muscles. I myself have seen a number of striking examples of permanent damage done to the partially paralyzed muscles from neglect of this principle, which I consider the most important of all those that must be kept in mind in the treatment of these cases of which we have been speaking.

One more most striking example of Miss Colby's originality and insight into the problems of physical therapeu-

tics I wish to speak about. This is the method *perfected* by her for the treatment of cases of obstetrical paralysis, caused by injury at birth. \* \* \* The method of treatment of these cases which Miss Colby *originated* consisted essentially in developing the strength of the affected muscles by exercise, and in preventing the formation of the secondary contractures by passive movements, to supplement these exercises. This treatment, which might be carried out with comparative ease in the case of adults and older children, is attended by great difficulties when it has to be given to small babies where coöperation cannot be expected; but here Miss Colby's ingenuity, and deep sympathy for and understanding of children, again came into play, and by utilizing the principle of play and imitation, which she has used so well in her book on exercise for children, she not only demonstrated the great use of this principle but was able to devise a technique for the treatment of this particular group of paralyses that produced results which are by far the best of any of which I know. Of course this method in certain cases of very severe injury, or in neglected cases must be supplemented by surgical operations for repair of the damaged plexus or for cutting contracted tendons, as that of the subscapular muscle. Even after these operations the subsequent treatment of these cases demands the use of the exercise method in order to obtain any real benefit from the operation.

I have seen many cases of severe injury of the nerves at birth which have shown practically perfect recovery by the use of the exercise treatment alone; and practically all cases in which a complete rupture of the nerve bundles has not taken place can be greatly benefited. This method of treatment has become the standard one for these cases which come to the Children's Hospital, and its success is shown by the gradual but great increase of the number of these cases coming there for advice, many of them I am sorry to say after having been told by

physicians, and good ones, that nothing could be done to help them.

I cannot close these fragmentary remarks of appreciation of Miss Colby's work, however, without a word in praise of her character. All who knew her will agree, I am sure, that the intense love of her work, and of little children, which was noticeable at once, were only part of the manifestations of a character that was always most unselfish, self-sacrificing in the extreme, and withal accompanied by an almost excessive modesty that rejected instinctively anything that even remotely resembled ostentation or boastfulness.

The loss of Miss Colby is a loss which will affect her profession deeply, and which is felt keenly by all who came in contact with her, whether as patient, pupil or associate in her work; but we trust that some of the results she produced are to become permanent additions to our means for the alleviation of disability and suffering.

A much larger sheaf of memorial tributes to Miss Colby could easily have been gathered from the many available. For instance, soon after her death a meeting of the Massachusetts Therapeutic Massage and Gymnastic Association was called in her memory by Dr. Douglas Graham. But the typical tributes selected for this pamphlet (covering her relations to Perkins Institution as well as her professional work), should suffice to fulfil its purpose of encouragement and inspiration, through the shining example of one who in spite of handicaps lived an honored, beneficent life.





